

HUGE C.I.A. OPERATION REPEATED IN U.S. AGAINST ANTIWAR AND OTHER DISSIDENTS IN NIXON



Richard Helms



James R. Schlesinger



William E. Colby

FILES ON CITIZENS

Helms Reportedly Got Surveillance Data in Charter Violation

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—The Central Intelligence Agency, directly violating its charter, conducted a massive illegal domestic intelligence operation during the Nixon Administration against the antiwar movement and other dissident groups in the United States, according to well-placed Government sources.

An extensive investigation by The New York Times has established that intelligence files on at least 10,000 American citizens were maintained by a special unit of the C.I.A. that was reporting directly to Richard Helms, then the Director of Central Intelligence, and now the Agency's acting chief.

In addition, the sources said, a check of the C.I.A.'s domestic files ordered last year by Mr. Helms's successor, James R. Schlesinger, produced evidence of dozens of other illegal activities by members of the C.I.A. inside the United States, beginning in the nineteen-fifties, including break-ins, wiretapping and the surreptitious inspection of mail.

A Different Category

Mr. Schlesinger was succeeded at the C.I.A. by William E. Colby in late 1973.

Those alleged operations, while also prohibited by law, were not targeted at dissident American citizens, the sources said, but were a different category of domestic activities that were secretly carried out as part of operations aimed at suspected foreign intelligence agents operating in the United States.

Under the 1947 act setting up the C.I.A., the agency was forbidden to have "police, subpoena, law enforcement powers or internal security functions" inside the United States. Those responsibilities fall to the F.B.I., which maintains a special internal security unit to deal with foreign intelligence threats.

Mr. Helms, who left the C. I. A. in February, 1973, for his new post in Teheran, could not be reached despite telephone calls there yesterday and today.

Network of Informants

Charles Cline, a duty officer at the American Embassy in Teheran, said today that a note informing Mr. Helms of the request by The Times for comment had been delivered to Mr. Helms's quarters this morning. By late evening Mr. Helms had not returned the call.

"This is explosive, it could destroy the agency," one official with access to details of the alleged domestic spying on dissidents said in an interview.

He described the program as similar in intent to the Army domestic surveillance programs that were censured by Congress four years ago.

"There was no excuse for what the agency did," the source said. "What you had was an insulated secret police agency not under internal question or audit."

ized agents to follow and photograph participants in antiwar and other demonstrations. The C.I.A. also set up a network of informants who were ordered to penetrate antiwar groups, the sources said.

At least one avowedly antiwar member of Congress was among those placed under surveillance by the C.I.A., the sources said. Other members of Congress were said to be included in the C.I.A.'s dossier on dissident Americans.

The names of the various Congressmen could not be learned, nor could any specific information about domestic C.I.A. break-ins and wiretappings be obtained.

It also could not be determined whether Mr. Helms had had specific authority from top aides to initiate the alleged domestic surveillance, or whether Mr. Helms had informed the President of the fruits, if any of the alleged operations.

Distress Reported

These alleged activities are known to have distressed both Mr. Schlesinger, now the Secretary of Defense, and Mr. Colby. Mr. Colby has reportedly told associates that he is considering the possibility of asking the Attorney General to institute legal action against some of those who had been involved in the clandestine domestic activities.

One official, who was directly involved in the initial C.I.A. inquiry last year into the alleged domestic spying, said that Mr. Schlesinger and his associates were unable to learn

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